THE MINISTER OF FINANCE AND COMPANY AFFAIRS (SHRI JASWANT SINGH): (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) Sales of bicycles by the major bicycle manufactures during March to November 2002, as compared to corresponding period of previous year, has shown only a marginal increase.

(c) Government have exempted excise duty on bicycles with effect from 1.3.2003.

Impact of river discharge in the coastal water

*300. SHRI A. VIJAYA RAGHAVAN: Will the Minister of WATER RESOURCES be pleased to state:

(a) whether any task force on the linking of rivers is constituted/to be constituted;

(b) if so, the details including the task assigned and the period allotted;

(c) whether his Ministry has ruled out the idea of Ganga-Cauvery link, as it is unworkable;

(d) if so, the details including the other attempts of inter river basin transfers that had been ruled by the competent authority;

(e) whether any studies on the impact of river discharge on the coastal waters and fishery resources were attempted in the light of the linking of river;

(f) if so, the details thereof; and

(g) if not, the reasons therefor?

THE MINISTER OF WATER RESOURCES (SHRI ARJUN CHARAN SETHI): (a) and (b) Yes, Sir. The Central Government has set-up a Task Force on Interlinking of Rivers under the Chairmanship of Shri Suresh Prabhu, Member Parliament (Lok Sabha) on December, 13,2002 with the following term of reference:—

(i) Provide guidance on norms of appraisal of individual projects in respect of economic viability, socio-economic impacts, environmental impacts and preparation of resettlement plans;

(ii) Devise suitable mechanism for bringing about speedy consensus amongst the States;

(iii) Prioritize the different project components for preparation of Detailed Project Reports and implementation;

(iv) Propose suitable organizational structure for implementing the project;

(v) Consider various modalities for project funding; and

(vi) Consider international dimesnsions that may be invovled in some poject components.

The Task Force is working to suggest and guide the task of achieving the goal of interlinking of rivers by the end of 2016.

(c) & (d) Captain Dastur and Dr. K. L. Rao have mooted Garland Canal Scheme and Ganga-Cauvery link respectively in the past. The proposal of Captain Dastur was examined by two committees of Experts comprising experts from Central Water Commission, State Governments and Professors from Indian Institute of Technology and University of Roorkee who were of the opinion that the proposal was technically unsound and economically prohibitive. Similarly, the Ganga-Gauvery link was examined by Central Water Commission and found to be grossly under estimated. Besides, the proposal was also devoid of any flood control benefit and required large block of power for lifting water. Both proposals were, therefore, given up.

(e) to (g) The feasibility studies being carried out by National Water Development Agency cover studies pertaining to environment and ecological surveys. In its studies, a minimum lean season flow of 10% of the total flows at diversion structure after meeting downstream requirements is being provided to maintain the environmental and ecological needs of the river regime and the downstream areas including coastal water and fisheries resources.

WRITTEN ANSWERSTO UNSTARRED QUESTIONS

Open slots in airports to foreign commercial flights

2007. SHRI RAJKUMAR DHOOT: Will the Minister of CIVIL AVIATION be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that Government have offered open slots in our airports to foreign commercial aircraft;